POSTMODERN'S "MOST WANTED":

USING A SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROCESS OF VOLUNTEER YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CONFERENCE

A Professional Project

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the Faculty of the

Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Sandra Roberts

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This professional project, completed by

Sandra Roberts

has been presented to and accepted by the

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for the degree of

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Faculty Committee:
Andrew Dreitcer
Karen Dalton

Dean: Emery A. Percell

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ABSTRACT

Postmodern's "Most Wanted":

Using a Spiritual Formation Process of Volunteer Youth

Leadership Development in a

Seventh-day Adventist Conference

by Sandra Roberts

The purpose of this study was to develop, implement and test a spiritual formation process of leadership development among volunteer youth leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist middle judicatory office of Southeastern California Conference in a changing cultural climate of postmodernism. A comprehensive process for working with leaders was developed and implemented over a four year time period. A specific portion of the process was tested using a written questionnaire and verbal interviews, which were used to assess the way volunteers perceived their own spirituality and leadership before and after four weeks of meetings and interaction with the volunteers. These informal meetings focused on providing space for intentionality in the spiritual life of the leader and encouraged the practice of spiritual exercises.

The thesis of the project is that implementing a spiritual formation process of leadership development is a necessary shift in pedagogy for training local church

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volunteer youth leaders to most effectively lead ministries to youth and young adults with an emerging postmodern world view which values authentic spirituality over other qualities and skill sets of leadership.

Chapter 1 introduces the process and provides the methodology and parameters of the research project. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the challenge of postmodernism to church leadership, the need for pedagogical change, and the historical context of spirituality and spiritual formation in both youth and leadership, as well as a theological foundation for leading such as change in a denomination. Chapter 3 summarizes and interprets the general findings while Chapter 4 provides recommendations for further study. Included in the paper is an outline of the overall process put in place as well as the specific sessions used with the youth leaders and a description of the spiritual exercises and practices presented for the use of the participants during the data collection.

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Table of Contents

Page

Chapter

1. Introduction 1

Statement of the Problem 1

Importance of the Problem 1

Thesis 4

Definitions of Terms 4

Work Previously Done in the Field 8

Scope and Limitations 12

Methodology 13

Chapter Outline 15

2. Theological Foundations 17

Theology of Change 17

Theology of Spiritual Formation 22

Spiritual Formation and Leadership 27

The Challenge of Leading Change 31

3. The Comprehensive Process of Spiritual Formation in Leadership 33

Development of the Process 33

The Process for Youth Leaders 36

Step 1 - Validation of Need 37

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Step 2 - Identification of Leaders and Prayer .. 39
Step 3 - Area Meetings 41
Step 4 - Intensive Care 50
Step 5 - Lending Library 53
Testing the Process 55
Instrument for Testing 56
Four-Week Outline 59
Recruitment of Participants 59
Week 1 61
Week 2 62
Half-Way Point 63
Week 3 63
Week 4 64
Completion of the Process 65
Analysis and Interpretation of Findings 66
4. Recommendations for Further Study 81
Conclusion 85
Appendixes
A. Sample Written Questionnaire 86
B. Sample Verbal Interview Questions 98
C. Sample of Week 1 Assignment 100
D. Sample of Week 2 Assignment 101

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E. Sample of Week 3 Assignment 103

F. Sample of Week 4 Assignment 105

G. Interview Questions for Conclusion of Process .. 107

Bibliography..... 108

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This project addressed the issues of spiritual care of youth, the retention of youth, and the inclusion of youth in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in Southern California as these relate to the need for authentic spirituality in the volunteer leaders who are working with those youth in the changing environment of an emerging postmodern worldview. Leading a paradigm shift in a process of leadership development at a Seventh-day Adventist Conference office youth ministries department was the focus of this study.

Importance of the Problem

Recent projected statistics cited in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination indicate 75% of the over 11 million worldwide church members are children, youth and young adults ages 35 and under.[1] In an average Seventh-day Adventist church in Southern California at any given Saturday service, however, the attendance one would observe does not reflect those statistics. The youth and young adults have a minimal

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[1] Baraka G. Muganda, informal discussion at North American Youth Directors Meeting, Denver, CO, November 2001.

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presence in many churches, and those in attendance are often meeting in a separate worship service concurrent with the adult services. Youth and young adults are, by numbers, the critical mass of church membership yet are not involved in many aspects of the life of the local congregation or at any level of leadership and decision making within the denomination.

In Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, a five county region with almost 66,000 church members, many of these youth and young adults reflect a changing worldview often referred to by sociologists as post-modern.[2] There is a major cultural shift in thinking that is more pluralistic, "mosaic,"[3] and more spiritual but less religious among these youth and young adults.

One major shift taking place is the change from a desire for relevancy that was the dominant quest for those classified

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[2] Neil Howe and William Strauss, Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 3-29.

[3] Tony Jones, Postmodern Youth Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 33-38.

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as Generation X to a desire among the Millennial Generation for everything to be real and experienced.[4]

These youth and young adults, in their passionate desire to have a real spirituality that is experiential, say that the most important leadership trait in a volunteer who would mentor them is an authentic spirituality. They want a person who can help them experience God in real ways.[5]

Pedagogy of volunteer youth leadership training in the Seventh-day Adventist church has not focused on the spirituality of the person leading but on giving the leaders information regarding program ideas, youth development issues, youth culture, and teaching techniques. Training has focused on equipping the volunteer youth leader with information that is task related and has neglected to address the spiritual formation of the leader. It is assumed that the leader is a spiritual person.

Many youth leaders may have an authentic spirituality due to other factors in their life, but this has not been the intentional focus of training and has left a disconnect

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[4] Ibid., 37.

[5] Mike Nappa, What I Wish My Youth Leader Knew About Youth Ministry (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1999), 187.

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between what the youth and young adults indicate is the most important leadership trait to them and the spirituality of many volunteer youth leaders. The emphasis of training must change to reflect the dominant need of volunteer leadership.

This project developed and tested a spiritual formation process of leadership development as an alternate pedagogy for volunteer youth leadership training.

Thesis

Implementing a spiritual formation process of leadership development in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is a necessary shift in pedagogy designed to encourage local church volunteer leaders to more intentionally nurture their own spiritual lives as they lead ministries to youth and young adults with an emerging postmodern world view that values authentic spirituality over other qualities or skills.

Definitions of Terms

Youth and Young Adults

In the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, youth and young adults are designated as those who are in high school through age 35. Denominational department structure divides the services it provides to the local church such as publications, training of volunteers, programming, and support

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based on this age categorization. Most Hispanic churches tend to informally include an additional five years, designating young adults as those through age 40.

Postmodern

Definitions and characteristics regarding postmodernism in literature are varied, but most declare that we are in the midst of a significantly changing culture and worldview and will most likely look back on this time in history and rename it much like we did the Age of Enlightenment. Fowler acknowledges that this experience of postmodernism "rings with controversy"[6] but proposes several clear definitions of the term. The definition that is the focus of the book, Faithful Change, is the following:

> The term refers to a broad development in contemporary thought that engages in deep ongoing criticism of the Enlightenment with its trust in the possibility of universal reason and its focus on meta-narratives such as belief in human progress and universal groundings for ethical principles or standards.[7]

Tony Jones provides a way of categorizing those with this emerging world view by suggesting an assessment of five

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[6] James Fowler, Faithful Change (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 13.

[7] Ibid., 14.

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attitudes or views: (1) Objectivity is out, subjectivity is in; (2) Question everything; (3) There is no Truth with a capital 'T'; (4) Tell stories; and (5) Never make lists.[8]

The very idea of postmodernism seems to defy a clear definition, but this paper will assume both that there is a significant change taking place in our culture and that the term is controversial. What is evident is that there is a cultural change that is leading to a different expectation of leadership, whatever that culture shift may be called.

Spirituality

A popular term, spirituality has many diverse definitions supported by current literature. This project will address Christian spirituality, specifically. Michael Downey provides a clear definition:

> Christian spirituality refers most fundamentally to living the Christian life in and through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Christian spirituality is most profitably understood when viewed in the context of the more basic and fundamental human quests for integration of mind, body and spirit.[9]

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[8] Tony Jones, 26-27.

[9] Michael Downey, Understanding Christian Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 49.

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Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation refers to the intentional life-long process referred to in Galatians 4:19, "...until Christ is formed in you,"[10] that is God-initiated through the work of the Holy Spirit. It involves weaving spiritual disciplines into the rhythm of life so as to create space for the grace of God to work on and continue to form our lives. It involves living out attentiveness to the Spirit of God in community.

Volunteers

Volunteers are those who work in leadership in the youth and young adult ministries of the local church who are not paid for their work. This sets them apart from the designation used by the denomination of youth professionals, meaning those who get paid any amount to minister to youth. The volunteers are typically elected through a nominating committee process in the local churches each year. Some area churches follow a two-year schedule for nominating volunteers. In general, there has been a high rate of turnover of volunteer youth leaders each year.

Generation X

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[10] Galatians 4:19 NIV.

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Generation X refers to those born between the years of 1961 and 1981. The years and terminology vary with researchers. Other terms sometimes used for this generation are 13th generation, Xers and Baby Busters.[11]

Millennial Generation

Millennial Generation refers to those born between the years of 1982 to the present. Other terms used to describe this generation include mosaics, 14th generation and generation Y.[12]

Work Previously Done in the Field

The topic of the matrix of postmodernism, spirituality and leadership is an emerging one. Literature is growing exponentially in the area of spirituality, as the term itself has become increasingly popular in western culture.[13] Literature on volunteer leadership training and retention has

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[11] William Mahedy and Janet Bernardi, A Generation Alone: Xers Making a Place in the World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 10-11.

[12] Howe and Strauss, 6.

[13] Robert Wuthnow, After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1-3.

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been produced,[14] and there is an entire industry composed of organizations such as Youth Specialties and Group that provide resources for volunteer development and training.

Most of the work in the area of leadership development, even in the context of the church, has focused on the model of corporate leadership, and I am concerned the church has adopted these corporate models without adequate theological reflection on how they do or do not resonate with our ecclesiology. While there are many helpful leadership resources, they are often missing the component of the role of the Spirit of God in the process of leadership development.

The rapidly changing cultural context of postmodernism provides another vacuum in regards to work previously done as most research is currently being conducted in this new and emerging worldview of youth and young adults.

There are persons with great passion beginning to look at the matrix of spirituality and leadership in the cultural context. The Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project of San Francisco Theological Seminary is developing spiritual leadership training sites across the nation. This is a Lilly

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[14] Robert Dale, Sharing Ministry with Volunteer Leaders (Nashville: Convention Press, 1986), 39.

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Endowment funded project directed by Mark Yaconelli. Definitive findings from this ongoing research have not been published.[15] Yaconelli has published some articles outlining the process of the project and sharing some of the preliminary insights the project is discovering. A book based on the findings of the project is to be published in the summer of 2006 entitled Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus.[16] In the marketing materials available on the website, Yaconelli writes,

> Contemplative youth ministry isn't just another ministry model; it's an opening of the heart, an attentiveness to God, a receptivity to the Holy Spirit, a growing relationship with Jesus and his way of compassion. Contemplative youth ministry isn't about becoming mystics or turning kids into cloistered monks and nuns; it's about helping kids become alive in Christ. It isn't about candles and labyrinths; it's about youth and adults becoming present and available to God's love.
>
> Contemplative youth ministry honors the desire to listen as well as teach in our interaction with kids. It grounds our ministries in prayer as well

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[15] Mark Yaconelli, "Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project, Re-sourcing Youth Ministry in Contemplative Prayer and Discernment," San Francisco Theological Seminary [online]; accessed 15 Feb. 2006; available from http://www.sfts.edu/resources/index.

[16] Mark Yaconelli, [online]; (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) accessed 15 Feb. 2006; available from http://www.sfts.edu/resources/index.

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> as evangelism - in silence as well as acts of justice. Contemplative youth ministry is about refusing to be so busy that you overlook God in your ministry. It's about remembering that Jesus goes before us and beside us.[17]

Value Genesis is a comprehensive research project in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination that is also currently in progress. The focus of the research is on the faith development of high school students attending Seventh-day Adventist schools. This research has not asked questions about youth leadership in particular, but some helpful information is emerging regarding youth and their perceptions of the Adventist Church and leadership that may be helpful. This project is currently collecting data through La Sierra University Hancock Center for Youth Ministry.[18]

The Leadership Institute, an organization located in Orange, California, and founded by Paul Jensen, has been leading a spiritual formation process of leadership development with clergy in the Southeastern California

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[17] Yaconelli, Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus [Book Online], 8.

[18] "Value Genesis", La Sierra University Hancock Center [online]; accessed 20 Feb. 2006; available from http://www.lasierra.edu/certers/hcyfm/.

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Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Some of the findings emerging in that work help inform this project.[19]

This Institute is intentionally bringing pastors and church leaders together in a process of retreat using a praxis model of learning and dialogue. It began over 10 years ago as an effort to explore methods of reaching the next generation of youth and young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This exploration led to a focus on the spiritual life and journey of the pastors and leaders and is ongoing and growing.

Scope and Limitations

This project provides one process model for volunteer youth leadership development within the context of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in Southeastern California Conference. This project was tested with volunteer youth leaders serving in churches in a five county region encompassing 160 churches and companies in the Conference territory. The project was not able to identify the effectiveness of this training process in all cultural settings within the denomination or within all geographical

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[19] The Leadership Institute [online]; accessed 20 Feb. 2006; available from http://theleadershipinstitute.org/.

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areas. It was assumed the results could vary with different cultural expectations of leadership, various levels of adaptation to postmodern thought, sizes of churches, and the responsibilities of the volunteers. Variables in resistance to a new process of training and to spiritual formation in general in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination are difficult to assess from the sample. The findings were considered in the context of geographic, ethnic, and church size factors as well as other possible variables such as life events affecting leadership.

The time limitations of a four-week period allowed for only an initial evaluation of the process used and did not provide conclusive evaluation of effectiveness over the extended period of time needed to further develop the process.

When looking at spiritual formation, one often needs to take a long view of a process. This project provides one snapshot in the beginning stage of what should be an extended process of leadership development.

Methodology

A comprehensive process of leadership and training of volunteer youth leaders in Southeastern California Conference was developed. This involved identifying local church

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volunteer youth leaders, contacting the leaders and inviting them to participate in an ongoing process. This process was based on spiritual formation of the lives of the youth leaders rather than on a task-oriented skill set as has been previously been the norm in Southeastern California Conference.

Implementation of this process and the challenge of leading change in an organization was also documented and evaluated.

In order to test the effectiveness of the process in contributing to the spiritual formation of the youth leaders, a sample group was invited to participate in a four-week study that involved a pre-test and post-test model with a control group in place. This sample group was invited to participate in weekly classical contemplative spiritual disciplines with both face-to-face contact and frequent e-mail contact. This involved coaching the leaders on the practice of the discipline, constant feedback as to what the leaders were noticing throughout the four weeks, and partnership of prayer with the leader.

The participating study group completed a test and post-process interview at the conclusion of the four weeks to

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determine if an intentional individual spiritual mentoring process helped increase the spiritual life of the leader. Some test results were statistically evaluated by a statistician. Other verbal responses in personal, phone, or e-mail conversations and interviews were evaluated for both leader's personal stories and personal assessment of the process.

It was assumed the leaders would be participating in other aspects of the more comprehensive spiritual formation process throughout the year offered through the conference office youth ministries department.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 establishes a need for a new pedagogy in leadership development in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the context of a shift in the needs of leadership for youth and young adults in an emerging postmodern culture. Methodology and terminology are outlined and defined.

Chapter 2 provides the theological foundation for this project and a change in pedagogy. The historical context of volunteer leadership training in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, the resistance to spirituality (as defined by

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the author) by adults, the postmodern context of our youth and young adults, and the implications for the church are discussed. The information is critiqued in the context of theological ecclesiology and eschatology with a new training model suggested that reflects the theological invitation to change in this cultural setting.

Chapter 3 outlines the four-week process of spiritual formation used. Ethnographic and testing instruments are described and evaluated.

Chapter 4 evaluates the results of using a new pedagogy of spiritual formation process in leadership development in the context of the methodology, theological ecclesiology and eschatology established in previous chapters. Recommendations for further study and the use of this suggested pedagogy are evaluated.

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CHAPTER 2

Theological Foundations

Theology of Change

One of the difficulties in addressing needed change in leadership and process in congregations is the ecclesiology that sometimes links scriptures such as Malachi 3:6, "I the Lord do not change,"[1] or Hebrews 3:18, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"[2] to 'We are God's church, and we change not.'

Changing the way a middle judicatory office relates to leaders may theologically challenge the system those leaders work within.

The invitation to address needed change in process and methodology, in a denominational system, often becomes a threat to individuals and the system when the idea of God is static and the ecclesiology held is based on traditions which have become codified over time. Policies and practices of a denomination can take precedence over changing cultural needs or, at the very least, fail to keep up with changing environments.

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1 Malachi 3:6 NIV.

2 Hebrews 13:8 NIV.

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Even though the emphasis of this paper is on individual spiritual formation of volunteers, the ecclesiastical context in which those individuals serve and the challenge of change in the local congregation also must be considered in theological reflection.

Jurgen Moltmann's works are helpful in forming a theological rationale for inviting a denominational system of churches to look forward to the future with hope and courageously implement change that will help bring about that future. Imagining the future of the church as God invites it to be instead of resigning oneself to how it currently exists is a theme throughout Moltmann's writings regarding both ecclesiology and eschatology. Trevor Hart in the essay "Imagination for the Kingdom of God? Hope, Promise, and the Transformative Power of an Imagined Future," writes in reference to Moltmann's theology, "Imagination is a key category for making sense of this hopeful living towards God's future. One of the key functions of imagination is the presentation of the otherwise absent."[3] Hart suggests

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[3] Trevor Hart, "Imagination for the Kingdom of God? Hope, Promise, and the Transformative Power of an Imagined Future." In God will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann, ed. Richard Bauckman (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1999), 54.

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Moltmann's emphasis on imagining the future Kingdom of God can help us discern what to do in the present.

> What imagination does in hope, its 'utopian function' as Bloch calls it, is thus twofold. First it leaps over the limits and perceived discontinuities which lie between present reality and the utopian future, even though it cannot yet see clearly the route from here to there - it intuits it as a Real-Possible. Second, through setting this vision before us and enabling us to 'look forward' to it, hope drives us forward, empowering and guiding ways of being in the world in the present which themselves serve to create the conditions in which the object of hope becomes possible.[4]

Moltmann does write that imagining this future and the renewal it could currently bring must include reflection on the past and present.

> The future of the church is a topic that concerns all of us. Yet it is a subject upon which we cannot reflect without some prior analysis of the present condition of the church and the developments from the past that have brought the church to her present state. Otherwise all our projected hopes for the future of the church would remain in the realm of dreams and speculations removed from reality.[5]

This imagination of hope also must influence present life and keep one from living outside of the present reality.

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[4] Ibid., 61.

[5] Jurgen Moltmann, Hope for the Church: Moltmann in Dialogue with Practical Theology, trans. Theodore Runyon (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 37.

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> Faith hopes in order to know what it believes. Hence all its knowledge will be an anticipatory, fragmentary knowledge forming a prelude to the promised future, and as such is committed to hope. Hence also vice versa the hope which arises from faith in God's promise will become the ferment in our thinking, its mainspring, the source of its restlessness and torment. The hope that is continually led on further by the promise of God reveals all thinking in history to be eschatologically oriented and eschatologically stamped as provisional. If hope draws faith into the realm of thought and life, then it can no longer consider itself to be an eschatological hope as distinct from the minor hopes that are directed towards attainable goals and visible changes in human life; neither can it as a result dissociate itself from such hopes by relegating them to a different sphere while considering its own future to be supra-worldly and purely spiritual in character.[6]

Embracing a theology of change based on Moltmann's ideas helped give me courage to proceed when change was resisted at some levels of the system. Proceeding with conviction and faith is often a necessary, although at times lonely, duty of spiritual leadership.

A theology of change in context of culture can be developed from Paul's writings. One often-used example is Acts 17 where Paul adapts his message and methodology for the

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[6] Jurgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implication of a Christian Eschatology, trans. Jems W. Leitch(New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 35.

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context of culture at Mars Hill[7]. Paul delivers the Gospel and stays true to his belief but makes the necessary changes to be culturally relevant. In a changing culture, the church must continue to update methodologies in order to be missional in the culture.

Walter Wink, in "The Spirits of Institutions,"[8] suggests that systems and institutions themselves need redemption. Writing about the "Powers" that exist in systems he states,

> Put in stark simplicity: The Powers are good. The Powers are fallen. The Powers must be redeemed. These three statements must be held together, for each, by itself, is not only untrue but downright mischievous. We cannot affirm governments or universities or businesses as good unless at the same time we recognize that they are fallen. We cannot face their oppressiveness unless we remember that they are also a part of God's good creation. And reflection on their creation and fall will seem to legitimate these Powers and blast any hope for change unless we assert, at the same time, that these Powers can and must be redeemed. But focus on their redemption will lead to utopian disillusionment unless we recognize that their transformation takes place with the limits of the fall.[9]

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[7] Acts 17:16-34 NIV.

[8] Walter Wink. "The Spirits of Institutions," in The Hidden Spirit: Discovering the Spirituality of Institutions, eds. James F. Cobble and Charles M. Elliott, (Mathews, NC: Christian Ministry Resources, Christian Ministry Press, 1999), 16.

[9] Ibid., 20.

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Viewing the denominational system as a system in need of redemption was helpful. Again, it gave me a foundation for courage when the effort to change the system was resisted by the system and those administrators that control the system.

The future, the past and present, the individual and the system, all must be part of the theological framework of change in a local congregation.

Theology of Spiritual Formation

Central to a theology of spiritual formation is an understanding of God's desire and purpose for humanity. As Christians, we hold the belief that we were created in the image of God to be in relationship with God, that humanity has veered from that focus in our lives as a result of sin but can be saved by grace, and that we can participate with God's desire to restore us to a full relationship with the Divine.

The Psalmist reminds us of how God delights in forming us and delights in an intimate relationship with us.

"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar."[10]

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[10] Psalm 139:1, 2 NIV.

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"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."[11]

Passages such as these celebrate God's intimate purpose and involvement in human existence. They also intimate a direction that life, at least a Christian's life, will take.

The Christian life is dynamic and growing, not static. It is a process of living by the Spirit as expressed in Galatians 5, "So I say, live by the Spirit,"[12] and celebrating the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control[13]—as the Spirit works in our lives.

Galatians 5 challenges the Christian, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."[14]

The process of spiritual formation involves cooperating with the movement of the Spirit of God in that dance. It involves an intentional effort on our part to be attentive to the Spirit of God.

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11 Psalm 139:13, 14 NIV.

12 Galatians 5:16 NIV.

13 Galatians 5:22 NIV.

14 Galatians 5:25 NIV.

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This attentiveness begins with the longing created and initiated by God to be in an intimate relationship with the Divine.

The process of living the Christian life as a formative process and not just a one time salvific event in the life of an individual is suggested in the often quoted Great Commission of Matthew 28: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."[15] Discipleship and teaching involve an intentional ongoing process that is relational and formative.

According to the words of Jesus, living the Christian life is an invitation to live life in all of its possible fullness and abundance. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."[16]

The Spirit's formation of our lives happens in the context of responding to the grace offered by God and the abundant fullness of the intimate relationship God desires to

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[15] Matthew 28:19, 20 NIV.

[16] John 10:10 NIV.

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have with humanity. This happens in individual lives in the context of spiritual community.

In an increasingly busy world of over-scheduling and the constant demands of daily living, the need to build rhythms and patterns into our lives to create space for the Spirit's formative work can be aided through spiritual disciplines. Dallas Willard, in The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives writes,

> A discipline for the spiritual life is, when the dust of history is blown away, nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom. When we understand that grace (charis) is gift (charisma), we then see that to grow in grace is to grow in what is given to us of God and by God. The disciplines are then, in the clearest sense, a means to that grace and also to those gifts. Spiritual disciplines, 'exercises unto godliness,' are only activities undertaken to make us capable of receiving more of his life and power without harm to ourselves or others.[17]

Developing a rhythm of being that includes creating space through the use of spiritual disciplines helps place a growing awareness of the Spirit of God at work in our lives at the center of our daily existence.

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[17] Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 56.

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Willard suggests two categories of disciplines that aide in the spiritual formation process: the disciplines of abstinence such as solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy and sacrifice and the disciplines of engagement such as study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession and submission.[18] Other categories of disciplines can be found throughout the literature as writers reflect on what has historically been helpful to the Christian community.

The caution, however, is to keep the focus on the relationship of deepening an intimacy with God and engaging in an intentional dance by stepping with the Spirit of God through life, not on the disciplines as an end in themselves.

The historical emphasis on an ascetic life that led to threads of "asceticism for asceticism's sake"[19] was a factor leading to the Protestant Reformation, which has influenced much of Western Christianity. Post-Reformation Christians have often viewed the many spiritual practices with an eye of caution as a result of the Reformation. In recent years there

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[18] Ibid., 158.

[19] Ibid., 143.

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has been an emerging interest in those practices among Protestant Christians.

Spiritual formation, then, is an ongoing journey, led by the Spirit of God, in a "holy partnership."[20] It is an invitation to live a life of growing intimacy in partnership with a Holy God. Evidence of that growing intimacy with God is central to the leadership qualities youth desire in those who mentor them.

Spiritual Formation and Leadership

In the book A Work of Heart,[21] author Reggie McNeal gives emphasis to the way God shaped spiritual leaders in biblical history. McNeal focuses on leaders such as Moses, David, Paul and Jesus. He writes, "Spiritual leadership is a work of the heart. This truth escapes many spiritual leaders. Caught up in helping other people maintain their hearts, they frequently ignore or neglect their own. They suffer for this oversight."[22]

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[20] "Getting Started in Spiritual Formation," in The Spiritual Formation Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), xxiii.

[21] Reggie McNeal, A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

[22] Ibid., ix.

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All four of the biblical leaders mentioned above had extensive times of personal spiritual formation before leading. They continued to take time for intentional formation throughout their leadership experiences.

There is an extensive need for spiritual leadership development that will encourage leaders to mentor and grow other spiritual leaders. Using the example of Moses in Numbers 11 as a spiritual leader, Kendra Creasy Dean and Ron Foster write regarding youth ministry leadership in The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry,

> Numbers 11 calls us back to a form of ministry in which we gather people for God so that God can give them what we cannot; a share of God's spirit, the spirit that empowers ministry. God admonishes us as leaders to bring not just youth but one another to the meeting tent. . . .God doesn't ask Moses to gather volunteers to hone their leadership skills. God asks him to gather the elders of the people so that God may address them.
>
> Godbearing youth ministry gives volunteers sacred space, 'meeting tents' where God calls their myriad talents into service for the sake of all Israel. This form of leadership development represents a significant shift in our usual thinking about volunteers.[23]

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[23] Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster. The God Bearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), 91,92.

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The instructions given to Moses to gather leaders in the tent of meeting[24] to be still in the presence of God together and listen to what God had to say provide a glimpse into what leadership development could look like. Moses was overwhelmed with the tasks of leadership, and God reminded Moses that this was about God, not about Moses. The first task of the additional leaders was to join Moses in the presence of God at the tent of meeting.

Spiritual leadership differs from other forms of leadership. There is an assumption by the very definition that the leader is focused on leading in the spiritual life of individuals, community or a system. There are implications for how leaders are chosen, how they are mentored, and the scope of the leadership role.

Volunteer youth leadership roles in local churches have often been difficult to fill. Some have a great fear of working with a generation they feel they do not understand. Some view the relationship and programming time commitment frequently required in youth ministry as impossible in their already busy schedule. Some view the leadership role as less important than other church leadership roles. As a result, youth leaders sometimes end up being anyone who will say yes,

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[24] Numbers 11:16, 17 NIV.

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without much emphasis placed on the life or qualifications of the leader. As a result, volunteer youth leaders often end up quitting after a short period of time. If a leader is chosen with a commitment to a continued spiritual process of personal development in mind and invited to participate in a formation process even before committing to any leadership activities, perhaps the spiritual leadership would be even more effective.

Emphasizing the need to focus on the soul of those leading youth, Tim Smith writes,

> We can't afford the luxury of playing around with youth ministry anymore. We need to work at it. A cosmetic approach that deals with such externals as numbers, dollars and celebrities won't cut it in a world of chaos and change. These become tiny matters when we look at the core issues—the matter of the heart. . . .Youth ministry used to mean focusing on the young person as an individual, entertaining him or her a little, and then slipping in a little something about God. It's all changed—the stakes are much higher. Teenagers are more fragile, they're more susceptible to stress, and they now face an array of risky behavior choices. We need to build into them a commitment to character growth—growth from the inside out. The best way to begin this kind of growth is to model it ourselves.[25]

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[25] Tim Smith, Nurturing the Soul of the Youth Worker: 8 Ways to Energize Your Life and Ministry (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1999), 12-13.

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Spiritual leadership requires that the leaders focus not just on the spiritual lives of those they are leading but on their own personal spiritual life as well. This is the work of the heart for the spiritual leader.

The Challenge of Leading Change

Changing a system-wide process of leadership development has significant and difficult implications for leadership. The conference office is in the lower middle strata of church structure, with the Union, Division and General Conference levels of leadership above it and the local church below it on any organizational chart. Any local church or conference level change in process is a departure from denominational resources developed at the national and world church level to be dispersed downward in the church structure. Since the conference office serves local churches, change in process may impact the local church as a system that has traditionally operated in sync with the denominational training methods, programs and materials.

Systems change slowly. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide denominational system with polity that keeps many policies and practices uniform for the entire system. The culture and demographics of Southern California differ from Zambia, Africa, or Chang Mai, Thailand, and yet the materials

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and resources sent to congregations in Zambia, Thailand and Southern California from the world headquarters office in Maryland are often the same. This is a particular challenge when it comes to developing a relevant youth and young adult ministry in the territory of Southern California. There is a North American Division office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in Maryland as well, but even the resources developed there are often difficult to contextualize in Southeastern California Conference.

Understanding both the challenges of changing a system and understanding how congregations operate and change is an important aspect of this study. At the middle judicatory level, the desired change from this process was focused on the local congregations and those that lead in them. A secondary consequence of the focus on the local congregation was the possibility that the denominational systems at the Union, Division, and General Conference levels might observe positive change in Southeastern Californian Conference youth ministry and churches and thus choose to contextualize the process for other geographic areas. Opportunities to share the process at national denominational meetings have already been made available.

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CHAPTER 3

The Comprehensive Process of Spiritual Formation in Leadership

Development of the Process

This section presents the outline of the development of the comprehensive process that was tested. The job description for the position for which I was hired in the middle judicatory office included the following item: "Provide Mentoring and Training for Local Church Youth Leaders."

I knew from the beginning that the expectation was also that I change much of what had been done in the past both in scope and method of mentoring and training. At the time I accepted this job, there was a convergence of personal life events that influenced the process.

First, I began to study in the Doctor of Ministry program at Claremont School of Theology with a focus on Spirituality. I understood immediately what Sandra Schneiders was referring to in her essay presented in 1997 at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality.[1] Schneiders states the study of spirituality is a "self-implicating

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[1] Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," Christian Spirituality Bulletin 6, no. 1 (1998): 1-12.

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enterprise"; that is, it engages one in personal reflection and change.[2] While the concern is that a discipline that is self-implicating may not be taken as seriously by other disciplines in the academy, I personally came to the program with the hope that it would indeed integrate into my ministry and my personal life. As Schneiders notes,

> Hidden in the attraction to the study of spirituality is probably, for many people, a deep yearning to see God. Scripture says that no one can see God and live. Studying the human experience of God is not viewing through a telescope a bush burning in a distant desert. It is taking a chance on hearing our name called at close range.[3]

Throughout the process of studying spirituality, I have sensed a constant need to stop, pause, and reflect on my own life, ministry, and spiritual yearnings. Thus, in developing a spiritual formation process of leadership development for other leaders, I found I also needed to focus on the process of my own personal spiritual formation. It has not been something simply stated in a job description but has, in fact, continued to transform my life.

Secondly, a few months prior to beginning the study process and the development of the comprehensive middle

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[2] Ibid., 9.

[3] Ibid., 9.

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judicatory plan, I joined a program Southeastern California Conference provides for pastors called "The Journey." The program is a spiritual formation process for pastors centered primarily in a guided retreat setting three times per year.

These converging life events have all informed the development of this process, and I cannot separate them from my own development. I sensed a need to be much more intentional about my own spiritual leadership and placed that as my first priority. If I were to work with leaders on their spiritual lives, mine needed tending. I committed to the following personal process as a part of this plan:

1. A daily rhythm of personal time in scripture and prayer.
2. A weekly rhythm of one half day for extended time of retreat and personal time with God
3. A monthly rhythm of a two-day personal spiritual retreat.
4. A commitment to the Journey process, which provided a three-day spiritual retreat three times a year with a community of colleagues.
5. A commitment to accountability in my personal spiritual life between retreats with three colleagues

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from the Journey. This was done primarily through e-mail and phone contact on a weekly basis.

6. Attendance at the Sabbath Retreat, a three day retreat offered by Youth Specialties with on-site spiritual direction.[4]
7. A commitment to meet twice a year for two days with the colleagues I worked with in the middle judicatory office for the purpose of spiritual retreat, reflection, and planning.

This personal commitment provided much of the foundation for the process developed. It was in those times of retreat and prayer that the process itself began to take shape. I was able to guard most of these scheduled commitments throughout the four-year process due to a high level of accountability with colleagues.

The Process for Youth Leaders

Although the process appears to be linear, it was, in fact, an ongoing process for all four years as youth leaders began at staggered times and, for various reasons, quit throughout the year. Most of the leaders, however, were serving from October through October of any given year.

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[4] "Sabbath Retreat", conducted by Youth Specialties, El Cajon, California, April 2004.

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Step 1 - Validation of Need

As the process began, I informally began to ask all high school students I met the following question: What is the most important qualification of a volunteer youth leader for the ministry you are participating in?

This was not done according to scientific method. These youth were not randomly selected or even personally identifiable in all cases. I would just ask the question whenever an opportunity arose and jot down the answers on everything from napkins to church bulletins. Sixty-eight youth were informally interviewed at church meetings where I was a guest or at counseling appointments and youth events. I stopped at this number, not for any scientific research reason, but because I believed I had the necessary validation of need.

Almost all of the youth mentioned the spiritual life of the leader in their response to the question. It was stated in various ways, but the desire to have a leader who was attentive to his or her own spiritual life and could mentor the students in theirs was consistent. The youth interviewed were all engaged in some aspect of church life and youth activity where I was present from the office, and one could assume a certain level of commitment on the part of the

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responders to spiritual life or spiritual community. Also consistently mentioned was the need for the leader to be welcoming and friendly. Again this was stated in various ways, but the youth seemed to often associate the two together. These responses are consistent with the results of a survey of youth participants in the Reach Workcamp program. Four hundred three youth from around the nation completed a seven-page survey regarding youth ministry. The results have been published in a book, What I Wish My Youth Leader Knew About Youth Ministry: A National Survey by Mike Nappa.[5] Rather than an open-ended question such as I asked, Nappa gave the youth twelve characteristics of a volunteer youth leader. They were to select two traits they felt were most important.

> The number one character quality teenagers desire in their volunteer staffers is a 'commitment to Jesus' plain and simple. Just under half of all teenagers (44%) listed this choice. That tells me that our teens don't want a leader who can simply teach them about faith; they want someone who can model that faith. Our students want to see what faith in Jesus looks, sounds and feels like. And they want to experience that through our example and the example of our staff.
>
> This data also suggests a real desire among teenagers for Christian mentors, people who can come alongside and shepherd them, who can encourage them

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[5] Mike Nappa, *What I Wish My Youth Leader Knew About Youth Ministry: A National Survey* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1999).

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> in the things of God and help them grow. Our students want leaders who are traveling the same faith journey as themselves—but a few steps ahead. What an honor—and what a responsibility.[6]

This desire was also expressed in the Cool Church Survey of over 10,000 youth across the country conducted by Group Magazine in 2001. Relationships with the adult mentors and the senior pastor topped their list as they identified a "Cool Church" as one that has a welcoming atmosphere to youth. The importance of actual spiritual traits of the leaders was not identified in this study, but the questions did not seek to surface that response.[7] These responses provided sufficient evidence to support the need to change how we mentored and trained volunteer youth leaders.

Step 2 - Identification of Leaders and Prayer

In October of each year, as church officers were elected in the local church and contact information was sent to our office, I had my secretary compile the list of volunteer youth leaders (usually around 400 names) in a compact paper format that I kept on my desk.

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[6] Ibid., 184,185.

[7] Rick Lawrence, "The Cool Church," Group Magazine, May 2001, 37-41.

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I made a commitment to pray for these youth leaders each week. As I started this process, they were just names from churches. I had very little personal knowledge of the majority of the leaders. As I began to pray for them, I decided I needed more personal information. I did a one-time mailing with a return stamped postcard introducing myself and committing to a prayer partnership. One line on the card asked them to share specific ways I could pray for them personally and in their youth ministry.

My secretary then helped me compile these in a database, and I was able to pray more specifically each week. As relationships developed and faces became known, those weekly prayers for the leaders became more and more personal. After about six months, phone calls and e-mails became common with the leaders sharing their concerns to pray about, issues they were facing in their ministries, and stories of what God had been doing. This often led to a time of prayer with youth leaders on the phone throughout the day.

This prayer ministry was not only relationship building with the youth leader but also became a process of discernment for me as their leader. I believe this ministry of prayer became one of the most important things I did in the process.

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Richard J. Foster in the book Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home writes,

> Intercessory Prayer is priestly ministry, and one of the most challenging teachings in the New Testament is the universal priesthood of all Christians. As priests, appointed and anointed by God, we have the honor of going before the Most High on behalf of others. This is not optional; it is a sacred obligation—and a precious privilege-of all who take up the yoke of Christ.[8]

This process of interceding in prayer gives one an opportunity to become involved on an intimate level with those who are led and also gives space for the Spirit of God to weave an intentional, responsive ministry of mentorship.

Donald G. Bloesch, in his book The Struggle of Prayer, quotes Augustine on intercessory prayer. "Prayer is to intercede for the well-being of others before God."[9] This intentionality of prayer laid the foundation for the rest of my interaction with the volunteer youth leaders.

Step 3 - Area Meetings

The next step of the process was to implement a series of area meetings twice a year. These were designed to be smaller, intimate meetings of volunteer leaders at restaurants

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[8] Richard J. Foster, Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 191.

[9] Donald G. Bloesch, The Struggle of Prayer (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 87.

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around Southern California. The first year, ten meetings were planned in the spring and ten in the fall. Additional meetings were added as necessary.

Personal invitations were sent out to all leaders to join me for dinner on any of the scheduled evenings, at any location. They were asked to RSVP and were welcome to bring spouses or other volunteers they had working in their youth ministries.

The purpose of these meetings was to get better acquainted, with each other as well as I with them, to listen to their hearts, and to pray with them over an informal dinner. Our office paid for all expenses for these area meetings. Whenever possible, a separate room at the venue was reserved for the meeting so we could have private conversation. A resource packet was prepared for each meeting with materials to help them in their ministries both from the denomination and from other youth ministry resource suppliers.

This was not the focus of the evening, however. Each of the leaders at these meetings received books for their personal spiritual growth as well as books that would expose them to a new youth ministry paradigm. One such book that was given to all leaders the first year was The God Bearing Life:

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The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry.[10] This book was also given to all youth pastors and many Senior Pastors as a catalyst for conversations regarding youth ministry paradigms. At these meetings a typical evening schedule went as follows:

6:30 p.m.	Welcome and food/drink orders
6:35-7:00 p.m.	A short get-acquainted activity while waiting for food
7:00-7:30 p.m.	Eat
7:30 p.m.	Order dessert
7:30-7:50 p.m.	A group spiritual exercise such as *Lectio Divina* while waiting
7:50-8:00 p.m.	Eat
8:00-8:30 p.m.	Time of prayer and sharing
8:30-8:35 p.m.	Pass out resources and say goodbye

The first two and a half years these meetings were intimate, meaningful, and confidential with the youth leaders becoming more and more vulnerable in sharing and praying together. By the end of the third year, however, the meeting attendance had increased to where it was not unusual to have between 40 and 45 people at one dinner. My schedule did not allow for additional meetings to be added to the calendar. We continued with the meetings getting larger, but the level of sharing and openness decreased. Meetings were also not as successful or seemed to lack depth in conversation between participants if the restaurant was overcrowded, noisy and

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[10] Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, The God Bearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998).

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chaotic. Noticing that, we tried to be more intentional about choosing locations that could provide for privacy.

The positive response to these meetings challenged me to try to find more ways to interact spiritually with these youth leaders in small group settings, and in the fourth year I began to schedule more individual appointments for breakfast, lunch and dinner meetings with small groups of leaders. Just as this was beginning to show effectiveness, I was asked to leave the position for another job in denominational administration.

It was after the first year of these meetings that the retention of volunteers in the churches significantly increased. We recorded a 37% increase in leaders who continued in their volunteer role. The following year we recorded an 11% increase, and for the subsequent two years it seemed to remain static. This was perhaps due to the fact that, in many churches, the nominating committee changes youth leaders each year just as they change all offices each year. Most likely a certain percentage of volunteers have a minimal commitment level no matter what kind of support is given. Thank you notes and e-mails indicated this level of personal support and prayer from the middle judicatory office

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encouraged them to stay with their local church ministries even when it was difficult.

At this point very little had been done to train leaders in a youth ministry skill set. In some ways, this process became an informal process of spiritual direction both for individuals and for groups as we listened to each other and prayed for each other at these meetings.

In his book, The Art of Spiritual Direction: Giving and Receiving Spiritual Guidance, W. Paul Jones, details eight types of spiritual direction.

1. Personal Direction
2. Friendship as Direction
3. Mentoring as Formational Direction
4. Mutual Direction
5. Communal Direction
6. Personal Discernment through Corporate Direction
7. Group Discernment through Corporate Direction
8. One-with-one Spiritual Direction[11]

These area meetings grew to intentionally provide for mentoring as "formational direction" and "communal direction,"

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[11] W. Paul Jones, The Art of Spiritual Direction: Giving and Receiving Spiritual Guidance (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2002), 15-21.

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as Jones defined them. Accountability developed from the relationships, as is recommended by Jones.

> Such communal direction works best when the group drafts a "rule" to which its members are willing to be held accountable, with each member translating that rule into particulars best suited for the individual's spiritual growth.[12]

This informal spiritual direction began to break down towards the end of the third year when the meeting attendance became larger, several new individuals were suddenly introduced into the group, and trust had not yet been built among all members.

In addition to identifying types of spiritual direction, Jones attempts to define what it is, acknowledging there is no current agreement on terminology.[13] He does identify what spiritual direction involves.

> Every person is a theologian, with spiritual direction a powerful way of rendering self-conscious that meaning in terms of the spirituality of one's daily autobiography. Theological living and spiritual pilgrimage go hand in hand, with spiritual direction the means of their correlation.[14]

When spiritual direction is understood in this fashion, these are some of the ways I have gleaned to express what is involved:

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[12] Ibid., 20.

[13] Ibid., 9.

[14] Ibid., 11.

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1. Discerning the shape and meaning of the Spirit's workings in one's life.
2. Envisioning the kind of person God dreams each individual can become.
3. Paying attention to God's urgings for the sake of spiritual maturity.
4. Celebrating, struggling, encouraging, reflecting on, and discerning God's workings by sharing one's faith journey with a trusted person.
5. Establishing and maintaining a growth orientation in one's faith life.
6. Providing as support a delicate balance of tenderness and toughness whereby one is no longer inclined to hide but is willing to be held accountable so as to no longer postpone becoming who one is.
7. Opening the road by which one can affirm his or her authentic identity.

Referring to the director's role, W. Paul Jones writes, "I like to image it as entering the lives of others in such a way that the director is able to sing their song when they forget the words."[15]

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[15] Ibid., 11-12.

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The openness, sharing, and mutual accountability in the volunteer youth leaders' spiritual lives that emerged from these meetings at times involved most of the above characteristics or activities. No certified spiritual director gave spiritual direction; instead, leaders were encouraged to seek one to meet with on their own.

Many times youth leaders came to the meetings and expressed disheartenment. The church boards often discouraged their plans, parents found the music in the youth room controversial, or the youth themselves had been disrespectful the past weekend. These meetings seemed to serve as a time to re-focus. We constantly talked about this ministry being about God, not us. We repeatedly pointed out the need to focus on our own spiritual journey, allowing our youth ministry to flow from that.

Chuck Miller[16], a member of the staff of the Leadership Institute in Orange County with which Southeastern California Conference contracts to lead the pastors' spiritual formation retreats, developed an image for ministry that I shared with the youth leaders. It has become common language in both the pastoral and volunteer youth leader culture of our conference.

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[16] Chuck Miller, "The Three Priorities," presented at Pine Springs Ranch, Mountain Center, CA, May 2003.

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The image is simple but profound. Chuck bases it on John 15, listing the priorities of ministry as follows:

1. Abiding for ourselves
2. Abiding for others
3. Bearing witness

The image involves common household items: a pitcher, a cup, a saucer and a plate.

1. The Pitcher is the Spirit of God.
2. The Cup is the believer.
3. The Saucer is the people God has placed within our sphere of influence of ministry. It is always people.
4. The Plate represents the programs or the plans we put in place for ministry.

Chuck then plays with these items showing a visual image of what happens when we pour ourselves into others without first abiding ourselves. He places the saucer over the cup and pours. The saucer fills, but the cup is empty. He then takes the saucer and places it under the cup and plate. After pouring water from the pitcher again, we can see that even if the one ministering is full but the focus is—often due to anxiety—on the plate or the program, the water never reaches the saucer—the people. It is possible to place our time and energy in ministry developing a program and miss what the

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Spirit of God wants to do through us to reach those placed around us.

This image has been used so often at meetings and in discussions that I have to smile when I am at a school or a local church and see Chuck's illustration being shared with others. This same image is often discussed at the Journey, and the convergence of both talking about it and emphasizing it to the volunteers as well as to the pastors is encouraging conversation as to how that actually can happen in a local church setting as they make plans for ministry, even beyond the youth ministry.

Step 4 - Intensive Care

During the end of the first year, after listening to Mark Yaconelli at the National Youth Workers Convention in Sacramento talk about the anxiety many youth workers face in their ministry, I spent some prayerful time discerning what I needed to do beyond the above first two aspects of the process. In a General Session, Mark shared what was being learned in the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project at San Francisco Theological Seminary.[17] He suggested the current

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[17] Mark Yaconelli, "Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project," San Francisco Theological Seminary, [online];

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paradigms and expectations of youth ministry that are program driven and frenzied cause even more anxiety in youth ministry among those who lead.

The text, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"[18] came to my mind as a passage to abide in for my future planning. I was on a retreat when the idea of an Intensive Care Unit for youth leaders, or ICU as we came to call it, was formed. This became a twice-yearly conference-wide meeting for all youth leaders. The meeting provided an opportunity to do several things at once and was held at our main office in Riverside for four hours on a Saturday afternoon.

This venue gave us the opportunity to set up and decorate a large room in preparation for the event. The room could be themed to model ways a youth room could be arranged and decorated. Each meeting was different. The first meeting was truly an ICU unit with red and white décor. The message was the same, however: Focus on the spiritual lives of the leaders but model ways they could go back and focus on the spiritual lives of their youth as well.

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accessed 15 Feb. 2006; available at http://www.sfts.edu/resources/index.

[18] 1 Peter 5:7 NIV.

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During each meeting, various prayer practices, times of silence and reflection, and a reflective communion service were modeled. One unit each meeting focused on the "nuts and bolts" of a youth ministry program, such as how to lead a youth drama team, how to counsel youth, how to lead a small group, and other skills helpful in a local church setting. Interactive prayer stations were set up around the building, and at each meeting, leaders were given opportunities to pray for those they were leading. These meetings also became a part of the anticipated rhythm of a year in the mentoring of youth leaders. Often the leaders stopped on their way out after the meeting to share a story of how refreshed or encouraged they felt again or how they felt ready to go back to their local church and continue.

These meetings took them out of their local church ministry setting twice a year to meet with other youth leaders, share their ministries with each other, and also experience a model of what youth ministry using a spiritual formation process could look like in their local church. Some still faced issues in attempting to implement this type of leadership in their local settings, as the pastors' expectations for a youth program were still that they hold a weekly inductive Bible study and take the youth to the beach.

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Step 5 - Lending Library

Most churches in our polity struggle to secure enough funds for local ministry, and the Riverside office serves to resource the churches. Funds were secured to purchase an extensive lending library of spiritual formation books, resources, videos, Groups' Prayer Path[19] with all of the components, including 20 CD players, music such as Stephen Iverson's Prayer[20] CD, and every known resource that might help local churches with this emphasis. A listing of the library contents was prepared and sent to each youth leader with the offer to respond with a prepaid shipment of any item he or she wished to check out and use in the local church.

In addition to helping local churches access resources they could not afford, a secondary benefit was constant feedback as to how useful they found the resources. This was particularly helpful, given the ethnic, theological, and geographic diversity of our conference, in discerning what additional resources to secure for the following year. Several of the resources were evaluated as poor. The primary

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19 "The Prayer Path: A Christ-Centered Labyrinth Experience," (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing) [online] available www.grouppublishing.com/prayerpath/kit.htm.

20 Stephen Iverson Prayer, prod. Stephen Iverson and Neal Harris, compact disc 2002.

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reason for the poor rating was that they were not age appropriate or, even though they were classified under the topic of spiritual formation, seemed to address everything but spiritual formation.

As an additional assessment of the appropriateness or quality of the materials, for two days I took a group of 12 Seventh-day Adventist pastors, all with Masters of Divinity and working on Doctor of Ministry programs with an emphasis in youth ministry, and placed them in groups of three as a part of a youth ministry class I was teaching. I knew that they were also concerned about quality resources in their churches, and most had a strong interest in spirituality and youth ministry. I asked them to use the various major resources we have in our lending library. Their assignment was to examine the books, look at the multi-media products supplied, and sample the exercises and suggested activities. I asked them to evaluate them theologically as well as culturally for their churches.

Some resources and products rated very well, and others were assessed to be theologically shallow, targeted too narrowly for the needs of their own churches, or poorly developed in a rush to get something on the market. All publishers had materials and products that the group rated as

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great as well as some products the group rated as poor. These ministers felt that the resources we make available need to be carefully evaluated due to the wide range in quality.

With the current proliferation of resources for spiritual formation on the religious market, I was reminded of the need for care in purchasing any of the latest resources. One day after an ICU, a group of youth leaders came up to me at the conclusion of a prayer exercise and contemplative reading of scripture. They said, "Thank you for reminding us that we don't need all the books, gimmicks, and games each week. You have just shown us how simple and deep God's word and presence can be."

Testing the Process

The stories youth leaders told affirmed the efficacy of the process. They consistently expressed thanks for the emphasis on nurturing their souls. Testing the process was the next task.

Testing the spiritual growth of adult volunteer youth leaders is difficult. It requires a willingness and vulnerability on the part of the leader to participate in something very personal. It also requires a relationship of trust for confidentiality.

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Instrument for Testing

Instruments developed for assessing an individual's spiritual maturity include tools such as the "Age Universal I-E scale," developed by Gordon Allport in 1967, to test Extrinsic and Intrinsic religious orientations.[21] Questions from this instrument were used in the pre-test and post-test questionnaires.

In addition, other instrumentation came from the George H. Gallup Institute survey as reported in the book The Next American Spirituality: Finding God in the Twenty-first Century.[22] The purpose of the study is identified in the following paragraph from that book:

> Profiling America's next spirituality means examining what spiritual practice looks like up close, day in, day out. As we have looked ahead we have wondered, *"What is the daily shape of faith behind the public expressions? How do people experience God in everyday life?"* The George H. Gallup Institute conducted an extensive survey of Americans. We queried their daily habits, how and when they sense God's presence, experience indescribable joy, know despair, turn to prayer, help a neighbor. We specifically asked a representative sample what happened in the last

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[21] Richard L. Gorsuch and G. Daniel Venable, "Development of an 'Age Universal' I-E Scale," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 22, no. 2 (June 1983): 181-87.

[22] George Gallup, Jr. and Timothy Jones, The Next American Spirituality: Finding God in the Twenty-First Century (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 2000).

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> twenty-four hours, believing this to give us the most sharply focused snapshots of what happens in the spiritual lives of Americans. While surveys typically record opinion and attitudes, our goal in this study was to probe deeper, to go to the bedrock of spiritual experience and actual practice.[23]

Questions from this twenty-four hour survey were used in the pre-test and post-test instrument.

A third source of questions utilized in an attempt to evaluate the spiritual life of the leaders is the "Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness/Spirituality for Use in Health Research: A Report of the Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging Working Group."[24] The work of this group acknowledges the difficulty in assessing the spirituality of an individual. The comprehensive instrument was developed for health care study, noting that

> Few health researchers have a scholarly background in religiousness/spirituality and most are not acquainted with the long history of attempts to conceptualize and measure multiple dimensions of religiousness. . . . It is becoming clear that religious/spiritual variables cannot simply be combined into a single scale that examines the effects of a single variable, "religiosity": rather, each relevant dimension of religiousness and

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[23] Ibid., 16-17, emphasis in the original.

[24] Ronald Abeles, et al., Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness/Spirituality for Use in Health Research: A Report of the Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging Working Group (1999). [online] accessed 14 Nov. 2003; available at http://www.fetzer.org/PDF/total_fetzer_book.pdf.

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> spirituality should be examined separately for its effects on physical and mental health.[25]

The instrument was further developed to distinguish between spirituality and religiousness in the assessment.

> It became important to articulate the distinction between religiousness and spirituality. While some may regard the two as indistinguishable, others believe religiousness has specific behavioral, social, doctrinal and denominational characteristics because it involves a system of worship and doctrine that is shared within a group. Spirituality is concerned with the transcendent, addressing ultimate questions about life's meaning, with the assumption that there is more to life than what we see or fully understand. Spirituality can call us beyond self to concern and compassion for others. While religions aim to foster and nourish the spiritual life-and spirituality is often a salient aspect of religious participation-it is possible to adopt the outward forms of religious worship and doctrine without having a strong relationship with the transcendent. Combining the two areas-religiousness and spirituality-in 1 instrument was a goal that realized this distinction.[26]

A few questions from this instrument were used on the pre and post-test questionnaire with the intention of asking some questions that measured religiousness and some that measured spirituality.

A fourth source of questions came from the interview instrument used by Andrew Deeter Dreitcer in research for his

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[25] Ibid., 2.

[26] Ibid., 2.

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dissertation "Roles of the Bible in Christian Spirituality: A Study of Seven Congregations."[27]

Finally, a few questions were developed specifically for the pre and post-test instrument for interview and written responses. These questions were developed in an attempt to have the youth leader's self-identify areas of their lives where they felt God had been working and what specific activities or life events had influenced them.

With all of the instruments developed, the attempt was to measure something that is supernatural, something that is not specifically tangible. The footprints of a life, however, can help identify the path the person is on. At the very least, these questions have been developed in an attempt to view the footprints, with a snapshot of the individual youth leaders' life. Sample instruments are found in Appendix A and B.

Four-Week Outline

Recruitment of Participants

Volunteer youth leaders were asked verbally and by e-mail to participate in this process. They were told it was for the

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[27] Andrew Deeter Dreitcer, "Roles of the Bible in Christian Spirituality: A Study of Seven Congregations" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1993), 286-93.

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purpose of my educational program and assured that the results of anything shared were confidential.

Thirty youth leaders were asked to participate as a control group, completing the pre-test and post-test surveys but were not asked to participate in the four week intensive process.

Thirty youth leaders were asked to participate in a four-week process of interaction with me. They were told it would involve the completion, on two separate occasions, of an interview and a written instrument. In between the testing, they would be asked to participate each week in suggested spiritual exercises on a daily basis, be in weekly e-mail contact with me regarding what they were noticing about the exercises, and receive two phone calls from me to pray with them, encourage their spiritual life, and ask questions.

The thirty youth leaders were selected from the list of all current church officers in Southeastern California Conference churches regardless of size, location or ethnicity. Some youth leaders serve with other leaders, and some are alone in their ministry. Youth leaders were told that at the end of the process I would take them out to dinner to thank them for their time and effort in assisting with this project.

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The assignments given to the youth leaders emphasized contemplative spiritual exercises. It was assumed by the ongoing traditional role of a volunteer youth leader that they were engaged in service, acts of compassion, and other outwardly focused activities that would encourage spiritual formation. The Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole places much emphasis on outward practices as well, such as diet, health of the body, and education. Most church members would already be engaged in disciplines that would be considered in these categories.

Week 1

On Sunday of Week 1, after completing the interview and the pre-test written instrument during which process e-mail addresses were obtained, participants were e-mailed Week 1 instructions. These instructions can be found in Appendix C.

The first week participants were invited to participate in a spiritual discernment exercise, the Awareness Examen. [28]

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[28] Resources for Awareness Examen were taken from the book by Dennis Linn, et al.; Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life (New York: Paulist Press, 1995.) Additional resources for Awareness Examen may be found in Marjorie J. Thompson, Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Life, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 83-100; Soul Tending: Life-Forming Practices for Older Youth and Young Adults (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 2002), 40-43; and David F. White, Practicing Discernment With Youth: A Transformative

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They were given one set of questions and asked to prayerfully follow the Awareness Examen each night before they went to bed. On the sixth day of Week 1, I e-mailed participants and asked them to briefly share how it was going.

Week 2

On Sunday of Week 2, participants were e-mailed a new set of instructions and encouraged to keep practicing Week 1 exercises, as most had found them very helpful and enjoyable.

Week 2 concentrated on biblical reading in the form of *lectio divina*. Instructions to briefly introduce them to the process were given in the e-mail, although most of the leaders had been introduced to *lectio divina* at meetings of the leadership team in the conference.

Participants were encouraged to select a passage, if they wished, but were specifically invited to use the same passage each day for the week. They were e-mailed a passage embedded in the e-mail itself, Isaiah 43: 1-5.[29] They were encouraged to devote 20-30 minutes a day for the entire week to dwell on that passage through the *lectio* process. On day six, they were e-mailed a request to respond to some specific questions.

Youth Ministry Approach (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press 2005), 89-113.

[29] Isaiah 43: 1-5 NIV.

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A copy of the e-mail and instructions is located in Appendix D.[30].

Half-Way Point

I called each participant halfway through the process to pray with them, encourage them, answer questions and have a personal conversation. This was intended to be informal spiritual direction.

Week 3

On Sunday of week three, participants were encouraged to continue with a weekly Awareness Examen, a daily reading of the Bible, and, to add to the rhythm of the week, an hour of solitude. Instructions and suggestions for what to do in this hour were e-mailed to them. Suggestions were also given for fitting an hour of solitude into the busy life of a volunteer. On the sixth day, volunteers were invited to respond briefly by e-mail to a few questions as to what they did during the hour and what they experienced. A copy of the e-mail sent can be found in Appendix E.

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[30] Resources for this exercise were found in Thelma Hall, Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina (New York: Paulist Press, 1988); Richard Peace, Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God Through Scripture (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress 1998); and M. Roberts Mulholland, Jr., Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books 2000).

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Resources for this exercise were found in Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence,[31] The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People,[32] and An Ordinary Day With Jesus,[33] a multi-media curriculum with a focus on living an unhurried life in the presence of God.

Week 4

For Week 4, participants were encouraged to continue to find a time of solitude each week, spend time in the Bible, and pray using the Awareness Examen at least once during the week. They were then invited to participate in a prayer process that had a movement of praying upward, inward and then outward. Each youth leader was e-mailed brief instructions and invited to go through the prayer process each day.

With the outward movement of prayer, they were introduced to the invitation to specifically pray for those on their

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[31] Ruth Haley Barton, Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2004).

[32] John Ortberg, The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People, expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Willow Creek Resources, 2002).

[33] Ruth Haley Barton and John Ortberg, An Ordinary Day with Jesus Curriculum Kit (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Association 2001).

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leadership team and for the youth they led. Ideas for keeping the names of the leaders in front of them for weekly prayer were presented, such as placing pictures and names of the youth on their computer to look at while praying, or printing out a deck of cards with the faces and names of the youth to sift through as they prayed. These visuals were meant to assist the youth leaders in keeping the focus on the unique life and heart of each individual in ways a simple written list of names might not.

During this week, I again called participants to pray with them and encourage them in the process. The participants were asked by e-mail to provide feedback regarding the prayer process on day six of Week 4. A copy of the e-mail for the week can be found in Appendix F.[34]

Completion of the Process

Each participant was asked to complete the written survey instrument again in an effort to evaluate whether an

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[34] Resources for this section have been developed from Richard Peace, Meditative Prayer: Entering God's Presence (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress 1998); and Richard J. Foster, Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home (San Francisco: Harper Collins 1992).

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intentional process of spiritual mentoring and interaction had increased their personal spirituality as a leader.

The entire verbal interview was not repeated, but specific questions were asked again with additional questions as to how they felt the process helped them spirituality, what helped them establish patterns for spiritual formation, and how they felt it helped them in their ministry to the youth. Questions asked at the end of the process can be found in Appendix G.

Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

A simple statistical analysis of the written interview questions with pre-test and post-test questions was completed. However, since this study was not controlled from other significant variables, it would not be appropriate to claim statistically significant results.

One example of the inability to control other influencing factors of spiritual growth was evident in the responses of some of the control group members. Most of the control group had little movement in the responses to the questions over a four-week period. Seven participants from one church, however, had a marked difference in the responses given to how often they fasted. Most indicated on the pre-test they never did but on the post-test indicated they fasted at least twice

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a week. I decided to ask some questions as to how that came about, as I had not focused on fasting in the exercises I had asked them to engage in. The leaders shared with me that their pastor had preached a series of sermons on fasting during the same time period, and they were following in his instructions during this time. One participant did indicate to me, however, that they participated more readily in the church fast as a result of my encouragement to engage in spiritual practices.

With so many variables possible, I will focus on the trends noticed in the responses to the questions and the verbal feedback received from the participants. The analysis of the data was done with the objective of noticing these trends and footprints in the participants' spiritual lives.

Because the sources of the questions are so varied and many were developed specifically to elicit the information I desired to know for this project, there is insufficient means to compare the data with other studies. Much more data was collected through the interview process and the written questions than can be used in the focus of this paper. Data is now available for some of the recommendations I made for further study. Significant observations in the data would require further questions for complete interpretation, given

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the complexity of factors that influence a person's spiritual life and growth.

In the pre-test process, one of the first significant observations I made was in the verbal interview process. Just over 50% of the 60 youth leaders interviewed were able to clearly identify religious or spiritual experiences that changed their life and that they described as a conversion experience leading to a personal gain in faith. This is a higher percentage rate than other studies have indicated would normally be present in a group of Christians. Richard Peace, professor of Spiritual Formation at Fuller Theological Seminary, stated in a recent lecture that only 30% of Christians can clearly identify a conversion experience.[35] This finding would require further questions to evaluate whether there is a correlation between the responses of the youth leaders and the fact that these individuals were either chosen by the church to lead or volunteered to lead the youth ministry in the local church.

When asked to indicate level of spirituality on a scale of 1 to 9 with one being very spiritual and nine being not

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[35] Richard Peace, "Spirituality and Outreach," Address presented at the Southeastern California Conference Evangelism Symposium, Riverside, CA, 6 Mar. 2006.

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spiritual at all, all of the leaders interviewed indicated they had a strong to very strong sense of considering themselves a spiritual person by their responses. They also indicated a strong need to have community, friends, and family in their life to experience spiritual growth, indicating a strong sense of the communal aspect of spirituality.

A majority of the leaders (72%) indicated in the verbal responses that they experienced stress in their work with the youth they led. Various responses were given, however, as to the source of that stress. The most common reasons given was the sense of responsibility they felt for the spiritual care and growth of the youth and the difficulty of leading a youth ministry that was often misunderstood or unsupported by the pastors and church leaders. Some felt they were "swimming upstream in a raging current," as one youth leader verbalized to me.

When asked was what the most important thing that they give to the youth they lead, the most common answers were an example and faithfulness in their responsibilities. This is an interesting finding as compared to the previously reported responses of youth who were asked what was most important to them in their youth leaders. The youth responses to this question were much more relational, and the youth leaders'

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responses seemed to be much more task oriented in nature. The written questions in the pre-test process also had some consistent findings when viewed all together.

All of the youth leaders indicated they participated in at least five different spiritual exercises weekly. The actual practices varied widely, but there was indication of an intentional effort to engage in activities to foster growth in their spiritual lives.

Questions 1-13 on the written interview were taken from sources with the intention of evaluating intrinsic versus extrinsic responses. With the correlation of intrinsic answers indicating a greater depth of spiritual maturity, most of the leaders' responses on a scale of 1-9 were 6 or higher when 9 was the highest intrinsic response. In the case of the number 1 indicating the intrinsic response, the youth leaders' responses were 4 or lower. This could be interpreted as a consistent above average self reported spiritual maturity in the lives of the youth leaders.

After the four-week period, the responses of the control group showed very little shift in the written responses. Of the 30 leaders in the control group, 26 of them completed the post-test questions. Two of the leaders had resigned, and two

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did not respond. Some of the answers shifted one number higher or lower, but this does not appear to be significant.

I would conclude that, for the control group, in the four-week period there was little increase in practice or indicators of spiritual growth. The one major variable as previously reported was in the area of fasting, which cannot be interpreted as related to this study.

The study group, however, had threads of interesting findings in the responses given. Twenty-seven of the 30 participants responded; one had moved out of the area, and two failed to respond further after the second week of e-mail and phone calls.

Perhaps the most significant finding was a 67% increase in the level of response to the last question on the survey instrument regarding intentionality in their spiritual lives. These leaders marked at least two levels higher on the instrument when compared to the pre-test responses. I would conclude the goal of increasing personal intentionality in tending to their spiritual lives through the practices and rhythms encouraged was met.

There was a slight shift in the intrinsic/extrinsic answers towards more intrinsic answers, but it was not statistically significant. Of the participants, 44% indicated

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an increase of at least two levels in the answers regarding in the practices on a weekly basis over the pre-test, and 41% indicated an increase of over two levels in responses to frequency of daily practices.

The practices most often engaged in with more frequency were found in responses to questions 14, 16, 19 and 29, which would be consistent with the practices I asked them to engage in. These were an increase in the daily time alone with God in question 14 and an increase of frequency of reading the Bible on their own based on responses to questions 16 and 29. This would be consistent with the invitation to the practice given in the process.

Question 19 asked about the frequency of extended time alone with God (more than 2 hours). In the pre-test this response was most frequently marked "never". In the post test 45% of the participants indicated a frequency of at least 2-3 times a month. This would indicate a higher frequency than the participants were invited to during the process since they were only asked to do it once. This response would indicate that, although this was reported as the most difficult of the exercises for the participants, at least 52% tried it more than twice during the time period.

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There was also a significant increase (37%) in the responses to the frequency of the practice of journaling. These responses were an increase from less than once a month in the pre-test to several times a week in the post-test. I do not know if participants viewed e-mailing me as journaling or if the invitation in the instructions to write out what they were noticing was the reason for this increase. It may not be at all related to the study. These positive findings reinforce the value of encouraging intentional activities in a mentoring process.

A response that needs further exploration and interpretation is the decrease in the response to bodily exercise. I would suggest an interpretation to explore is the possibility that the increase in the time spent in the other spiritual exercises was at the expense of bodily exercise. Perhaps with busy schedules, participants did not feel they had time to do both. If it was, indeed, a decision of either/or, I would want to explore ways to encourage both attentiveness to body and soul.

Another unexpected finding in the post-test responses was the 22% of participants who indicated a significant decrease (at least three levels of frequency when asked to respond from "never" to "all of the time") in how often they felt God's

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presence, as compared to the pre-test responses, even though they were much more intentional in the spiritual practices. I talked to one man who said felt the reason for his response was because he felt more comfortable with being honest as the process proceeded. He indicated that in the pre-test he felt pressure to give answers that were expected, not particularly true. This brings out the difficulty of truth telling with each other in our spiritual lives.

Another young adult woman who marked a decrease said she truly felt some disturbing distance from God as the process went on, even though she engaged in all practices. This led to a discussion of spiritual maturity factors and the times that God seems absent. Further questioning of the participant would be necessary in order to explore the reasons for this decrease. It could be interpreted as more honest answering or an indicator of other factors in the spiritual life of the participant.

The post-test interviews also led to findings that were helpful in evaluating the process. The most common response to the verbal question as to what they found most helpful was the increase in accountability. Knowing they were going to need to respond to me and that they were participating in a study was the reason some participants gave as to why they

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felt more accountable. The second most frequent response as to what they found helpful was they way the process helped to increase the practices they engaged in to nurture their spiritual life both in frequency and variety.

All participants indicated some level of positive change in the way the process helped them view what they needed to do in order to nurture their spiritual life. Several mentioned the exposure to extended time alone with God as helpful, and other revealed they knew community and accountability were important but now had some tools and knowledge as to how to integrate these into their lives.

In response to the question as to which discipline they were most likely to continue, the participants mentioned all of them with equal frequency, although most marked three. In other words, the responses do not favor one discipline over another.

When asked what impact this process had on their role as youth leaders, most indicated it helped them realize the importance of their own spiritual lives and what they bring to the ministry. Several mentioned it gave them tools they can use with the other leaders in their group and with the youth they lead. Another group revealed that it helped them focus

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on what is important, and five stated it helped them feel refreshed.

Although I had anticipated the leaders would sense less anxiety about their role as a youth leader with an increase in the practices and the desired spiritual growth, this was not evident in the responses to the post-test interview. Most of the participants were at the same level of anxiety in their response on a scale of 1-9 after the four-week period, and six selected numbers on the scale indicating much higher anxiety. The six with raised anxiety level responses provided various reasons for the increase. Two indicated they felt a greater sense of burden for the spiritual lives of the youth, and three indicated their responses were related to feeling they could be more honest at the end of the process. One could not explain the difference. Again, although these responses require further dialogue for interpretation, they did continue to raise my awareness of the need for open and honest discussion with mentors about the personal issues of ministry.

The findings in the responses of the participants clearly move in a progression of footprints toward indicators of greater spiritual maturity. This is encouraging and consistent with the desired outcome of this testing process.

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Perhaps a sample of some of the stories and e-mails would give a more complete picture of what I noticed. Throughout the process the e-mail and verbal conversations were very positive. Participants also became progressively more open and vulnerable as we went through the process.

In response to the Awareness Examen the first week, one participant wrote by e-mail,

> This exercise helped me be more aware of God's presence in my every day life. By asking myself these questions, I was able to look back at my day and realize where I felt God the most. . . . I saw a pattern. . . . I was least aware of God's presence when I was too caught up with my activities. It was as if I was too involved in these activities that I didn't find the time for God. . . . It allowed me to see how I can build a better spiritual relationship with God.

Another e-mailed me after spending the week meditating on Isaiah 43.

> This made the Bible seem tangible and real to me. I could see God carrying me through anything that happens, even the fires. I felt loved, cared for and truly honored as I spent time in this passage. It was nice to have permission to enjoy the text and not feel like I had to develop a sermon or a Bible study from it. By enjoying and meditating on the text, I enjoyed the presence of God through reading the Bible. It is real.

The responses to the invitation for an hour of silence and solitude were mixed, as many participants indicated they had a difficult time with an entire hour. Several admitted

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they fell asleep or were so tired they felt they were inattentive. Several were distracted by too much to do, stressed with too much activity around them, and wandering minds. Some weren't sure what to do after the first 10 minutes or so and gave up. This was the most difficult of the disciplines for the participants to follow.

Several did e-mail with positive responses to the time of solitude. "I know it is important, and this helped me to just DO IT! (I knew you would ask)." The accountability factor seemed significant to several participants. Knowing they were to respond by e-mail and would receive a phone call encouraged several of them to commit time to the practices. Without the accountability, some mentioned, they probably would have ignored the e-mails, not from a lack of desire, but because of a busy schedule.

The invitation during the final week to participate in a prayer using the Psalms received a very positive response. A few had done this with me before in meetings and stated they always enjoyed a more guided prayer experience. Several were trying to find ways to more intentionally pray for those in their youth group. One youth leader told me they printed cards for all the youth leaders with faces and names of the entire youth group, and if they didn't have pictures, they

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left it blank. Praying over those blank cards was especially meaningful for one leader as he realized the absence of those youth from the community.

This process also fit in with the pitcher, cup, saucer and plate imagery so often presented at our youth leader meetings. One participant mentioned he noticed the similarities in movement and priorities as he was engaging in the prayer practice.

The times of prayer with the participants re-affirmed the need for community and support of volunteers. Several expressed feeling isolated and spoke of how they appreciated the opportunity to talk confidentially and openly with someone regarding their own spiritual lives. Some, however, were not as open. There may be several reasons for that. Some personalities are more private; some might have had a difficult time being that vulnerable with someone in a conference leadership role that they perceive as distant; some expressed guilt. One such participant stated, "I know I committed to this process with you, and I really wanted to help. . . . I haven't had time to check my e-mail. . . . I have been so busy. . . . I hope it didn't mess you up. . . . Don't give up on me."

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Two participants also said the exercises were helpful not just for themselves but also for others. One used them in her family for family worship, and another used them at church (and called to ask permission).

I recently received a postcard from a participant who had just moved across the country asking, "Are you still praying for me? The thought that you are gives me courage in my adjustment of [sic] the move-I miss you all."

Another youth leader left me a message on my cell phone to say, "The support I feel from your office keeps me going. I feel like I matter-that my ministry matters to someone even when it doesn't seem to matter much at my church. I need help getting them (my church) to realize the youth matter."

A young adult who was leading youth in a small church and recently moved with his family to a church outside Southeastern California Conference e-mailed, "I want to come back-I miss the support, the prayers, the knowing someone cares. Most of all—I miss the encouragement to keep on in my spiritual life. It helped, you know. I need that. Do you have a job for me that will pay me to do this?"

The consistency of their responses indicated the process was accomplishing the intended goal of spiritual formation.

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CHAPTER 4

Recommendations for Further Study

Analyzing and interpreting the findings of this study led to many questions that could be recommended for further study. One of the most obvious is the need for a longitudinal study to ascertain the long term spiritual growth and effectiveness of the youth leaders engaged in a process developed from a spiritual formation center. The results of the four weeks of intensive interaction seemed to raise both the level of engagement in spiritual practices and the youth leaders' reported raised awareness and intentionality in their spiritual life. A question that needs to be asked is, "Could this be sustained over a longer period of time?" and attention given to what that might look like.

This study evaluated one specific process of the leadership development of the youth leaders over a short period of time. Further study could include evaluation of the spiritual growth of the youth they are leading and how this pedagogy might affect that growth. The overall retention and involvement of youth in the life of the local congregation, which was noted as a concern in the statement of the problem, requires further study to see if this process ultimately leads to an increase in retention.

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The perceptions of youth ministry and this leadership development process held by the local church pastoral leadership and other leadership positions in the church could also be evaluated for an understanding of any correlation between those perceptions, support, and the outcome of the process.

One of the findings that seemed to indicate some participants decreased their exercise program in order to spend time engaging in the spiritual practices could also be studied further. The question of time management in a leader's life and priorities when balancing a complex life could be addressed.

Other leadership skills could be taught to enhance the youth leaders overall confidence and effectiveness. Further study as to how to integrate an even more comprehensive leadership development and its results on their anxiety levels and effectiveness could be pursued.

This process was intense on my part as I found myself mentoring so many leaders. If the pressure of the academic component in my life had not been present, I am not certain I could have sustained that level of time commitment and interaction even through the four weeks. Much of my other work had to be set aside in order to e-mail, make phone calls,

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and engage in the one-on-one interaction. In order to sustain that kind of interaction over a long period of time, more mentors need to be developed. Both how to develop mentors to assist in the process from the conference level and how to involve them in effective spiritual mentoring need to be studied.

The question of changing culture and its effect on youth ministry and overall church ministry must continue to be addressed in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. It would be desirable to "get ahead of the curve" of change and lead it from a conference level and not just react to it as I still feel myself doing at times. This requires ongoing study, evaluation, dialogue and changing of methodology and practice.

Since I began this academic program, I have moved from a local church pastorate to the youth director position in the conference office and then, 18 months ago, to an elected administrative position. My current job responsibilities involve leadership development of the 246 pastors in Southeastern California Conference and leadership of the conference office with over 90 employees and department administrators that service our five county region as well as leadership of committees that form policies and make decisions regarding resource allocations to churches.

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The encouraging findings of this mentoring process and the positive experience of the youth leaders inspire me to continue to evaluate how I might use this process in my current leadership roles. The culture of administration is very different from that of the youth ministry department office. This position is much more task-oriented, committee-driven and policy-focused. I am interested in continuing to study how I can implement such a comprehensive process in an intense administrative culture where it is not unusual to find ourselves in meetings 10 to 16 hours a day. These meetings may begin with prayer, but beyond that there is an assumed spirituality of the participants.

I would assume the resistance to change could be even greater and the rhythm of integration with our spiritual lives as administrative leaders even more difficult than in the culture of youth ministry. I am currently preparing a presentation for administration to discuss possible options as a first step toward leading some of that change and am committed to a careful and prayerfully intentional study of how this might take place.

This process could also be used in the development of leadership in other local church ministries. A typical Seventh-day Adventist church has many ministries with leaders

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elected to oversee each ministry. Some of those include women's, children's, and music ministries, church boards, finance committees, and worship committees. The process could be contextualized for each of these ministries and studied for further development.

Conclusion

I would conclude that an intentional process of leadership development of volunteer youth leaders based on spiritual formation is a major step toward a healthy youth ministry. Even though this process gave just a glimpse of the development of leaders over a short period of time, the positive results lead me to believe there is much hope for such continued change with consistent effort from the conference office. The phrase from the Wizard of Oz, "We are not in Kansas anymore," is often repeated in dialogue regarding postmodernism, youth ministry, and the church. We are indeed in a different location. Belief in that reality can continue to inspire the church and those of us who lead to be intentional about looking to the future of the church with hope. It can inspire us to provide leadership development that will be attentive in following the Spirit of God into that future.

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Appendix A

Written Questionnaire

Church Name_____

Your leadership role at church_____

How long have you been a youth leader?_____How many years?____ Months?_____

NAME_____email_____phone_____

Thank you for participating in this important study. All names will be completely confidential in reports given or written.

PART 1:

Please indicate on a scale of 1-9 (1-totally disagree/9-totally agree) your response to the following statements by placing a circle around the number:

1. **I enjoy reading about my religion**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
2. **I go to church because it helps me make friends**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
3. **It doesn't much matter what I believe as long as I am good**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
4. **It is important to spend time in private thought and prayer**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
5. **I have often had a strong sense of God's presence**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
6. **I pray mainly to gain relief and protection**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
7. **I try hard to live out all my religious beliefs**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
8. **What religion offers me most is comfort in time of trouble and sorrow**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree
9. **Prayer is for peace and happiness**
   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree

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10. Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree

11. My whole life is based on my religion

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree

12. I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree

13. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in my life

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree

PART 2:

Please check the response closest to actual time:

1. On an average day in the past week, I met alone with God in prayer and meditation/spiritual exercises:

____0 minutes
____1-10 minutes
____11-20 minutes
____21-30 minutes
____31-40 minutes
____41-50 minutes
____51-60 minutes
____1 hour or more

2. How often do you pray or meditate, other than at church or before meals?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

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3. How often do you read the Bible on your own?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

4. How often do you tell someone about the work of God in your life?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2 - 3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

5. How often do you do acts of mercy and compassion for others?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2 - 3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than once a day

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6. How often do you take extended time with God (more than 2 hours)?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

7. How often do you journal?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

8. How often do you fast?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

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9. How often do you practice silence so as to be attentive to God's voice?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

10. How often do you confess sins or make things right with others?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

11. How often do you worship?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

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12. How often do you submit to God/others when it is not easy to do so?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

13. How often do you exercise bodily?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

14. How often do you receive spiritual directions from others?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

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15. How often do you fellowship in a small group?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

16. How often do you study the Bible?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

17. How often do you tithe or give offerings?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

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18. How often do you intercede in prayer for others?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

19. How often do you take an overnight retreat to be with God?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

20. How often do you visit a web site that is related to churches or contains spiritual themes?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____more than 3 times a day

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21. How often do you counsel with someone from a spiritual perspective?

____never
____less than once a month
____about once a month
____2-3 times a month
____once a week
____several times a week
____once a day
____2-3 times a day
____ more than 3 times a day

22. I feel God's presence:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

23. I find strength and comfort in my religion:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

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24. I feel a deep inner peace and harmony:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

25. I desire to be closer to God:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

26. I feel God's love for me, directly or through others:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

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27. I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

28. I experience indescribable joy:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

29. I have dark moments of discouragement or despair:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

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30. I have a sense of being a part of God's plan or purpose:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

31. I try to be intentional about my spiritual life:

____never
____almost never
____once in a while
____some days
____most days
____every day
____several times a day
____most of the day
____all of the time

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Appendix B

VERBAL INTERVIEW

NAME_____

CHURCH NAME_____

Spiritual History:

1. Did you ever have a religious or spiritual experience that changed your life?
   a. When? (Age?)
   b. Can you tell me about that experience?

2. Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith?
   a. When? (Age?)
   b. Can you tell me about that gain?

3. Have you ever had a significant loss in your faith?
   a. When? (Age?)
   b. Can you tell me about that loss?

4. To what extent would you consider yourself a spiritual person?
   a. On a scale of 1-9, one being very spiritual, 9 being not spiritual at all.

5. To what extent do you have a sense of mission or calling in your life?
   a. On a scale of 1-9, one being a very strong sense, 9 being no sense at all.

6. In your opinion, what is the most important element that makes a Christian a Christian?

7. What does the word "spirituality/spiritual life" mean to you?

8. What do you feel you need in your life to experience spiritual growth?

9. What nurtures your spiritual growth?

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10. How do you get in touch with God?

11. What is prayer for you?

12. How do you integrate your personal relationship with God in your work as a youth leader?

13. How do you make decisions in your life?

14. How stressed are you about your work with the youth you lead?

15. What is the most important thing for you to give the youth you lead?

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APPENDIX C

Week 1 Assignment

E-mail sent to participants:

Week 1

The beginning of a four-week journey together.
Thank you for your willingness to participate with me in this process of learning together.

The spiritual life is lived out in cooperation with the Spirit of God. Galatians 5:25 "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."
This week is an invitation to be attentive to how the Spirit is leading your steps and to a practice that many Christians have found to be helpful in noticing the movement of the Spirit.

At the end of each day, before you go to bed, I would invite you to do the following:

1. Prayerfully reflect on the past twenty-four hours.
2. Ask the questions as you pray
    a. Where and/or when did you most sense God's presence today?
    b. Where and/or when did you least sense God's presence today?
3. As you notice those times and places, prayerfully reflect on what the Spirit of God may be inviting you to be attentive to in your life.
4. Offer your reflections on those places and times to God with thanks. You may wish to journal your reflections.

I will be in e-mail contact with you at the end of the week to dialogue with you regarding this process.

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APPENDIX D

Week 2 Assignment

E-mail sent to participants:

Week 2

Thank you for your feedback as you focused on attentiveness to the Spirit of God in your life this past week. I invite you to continue with the exercise as you add this week's practice to the rhythm of your week.

This week I invite you to focus on abiding in God's word in contemplative meditation. Enjoy just feasting on the words of scripture each day.

Lectio Divina is a way of prayerfully meditating on God's word and just taking in what the living, vibrant Word of God invites you to.

I invite you to find a few moments each day, in quietness and stillness, to do the following:

I am suggesting you use Isaiah 43: 1-5, but feel free to use another passage.
"But now, this is what the Lord says-he who created you . . . he who formed you . . . Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; . . . you are precious and honored in my sight and because I love you. . . . Do not be afraid, for I am with you."

1. Prepare by focusing your thoughts on God. Pray.
2. Read the passage slowly and prayerfully two times. You may want to read it aloud and listen carefully to the word of the Lord.
3. Be attentive to a word or phrase that strikes you. Think about the connection between your life and the phrase.
4. Offer your thoughts to God.

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5. Read the passage through again and sit in silence, remaining open to images, feelings or impressions that arise from the reading.
6. Continue to sit in silence before God and allow God to use the passage to invite you to respond in prayer to those feelings, images or impressions.
7. Offer thanks to God in prayer.

I will be e-mailing each of you to ask for feedback on this process and will also attempt to call each of you on your cell phones at the end of the week. I want to pray with you as we continue this journey together.

Blessings.

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APPENDIX E

Week 3 Assignment

E-mail sent to participants:

Greetings. This is the next to the last e-mail I will be sending you with instructions. Thank you for your ongoing participation in this process. Many of you responded last week that you found the Word of God to be refreshing and new as you approached it. Continue to enjoy the first two practices as you add a third this week.

This week I would like to invite you to read the following quotes and texts and then plan for an hour of solitude and silence with God sometime in your week. Suggestions for that time can be found below the quotes.

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE:
"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10
"Solitude is the furnace of transformation." Nouwen
"Make no mistake about it-it is busyness that rules the day and, all too often, our souls." Baker
"It is solitude and solitude alone that opens the possibility of a radical relationship to God that can withstand all external events." Willard
"He went out to a secluded place, and prayed." Mark 1:35
"A life of unbridled activity and constant striving mis-shapes our souls." Creasy Dean
"The desire for solitude isn't an effort to flee from the world; it is an attempt to run toward God, to know God better and to hear God's voice amid the din." Talbot
"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me, and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me...watch how I do it. Learn the unforced Rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me, and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matthew 11: 28-30 Message

Spend an hour of solitude and silence with God-take a real rest in God's presence. Just be.

1. Find a spot free from distractions.

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2. Quiet your mind, body and heart in a way that works for you. Sometimes listening to music, reading a psalm or just paying attention to your breathing may be helpful.
3. Ask God to help you be aware of His presence with you.
4. Just be still . . . and listen . . . and rest in God's presence.
5. If you find yourself distracted, pay attention to what is difficult for you.
6. Write to me briefly about the hour. What was it like for you? How difficult was it to be in silence and solitude intentionally present before God? Was an hour too long? Did you sense God's presence?

Thank you.
Blessings to you.

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APPENDIX F

Week 4 Assignment

E-mail sent to participants

Greetings.

Solitude is difficult-especially intentional time to just be still and quiet before God. Your responses to me indicated many of you struggled with the time of silence in a world full of noise, and I encourage you to keep making space each week in your calendar for some time of silence and solitude.

Thank you for your participation. As you continue with the previous disciplines, I invite you to an intentional prayer time this week. This will focus on an upward, inward, and outward movement in your prayer time as you continue to allow the Spirit of God to fill you and then pour out of you and around you in your ministry to the youth you work with. This is one way of moving through your prayer time. Many others can be used as well.

The Psalms are full of prayer movements, and I will suggest one you can follow with selected readings from the Message-or you can choose your own texts.

1. Quiet yourself in the presence of God and read:
   (Upward Movement of Prayer)
   "All together now-applause for God!
   Sing songs to the tune of his glory, set glory to the rhythms of his praise. . . . Take a good look at God's wonders-they will take your breath away."
   Psalm 65

2. What praises and thanksgivings do you have to give God? I invite you to offer those to Him.

3. (Inward Movement of Prayer)
   "God, you're may last chance of the day.
   I spend the night on my knees before you." Psalm 88

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4. As you pray before God, be attentive to your needs and offer those to God. What is God doing in you, around you and through you?

5. (Outward Movement of Prayer)
"Your love, God, is my song and I'll sing it! I'm forever telling everyone how faithful you are. I'll never quit telling the story of your love." Psalm 89

6. Ask God to bring to mind those in your youth ministry team and the youth and/or young adults in your circle of influence. Who do you need to lift up to God in prayer? Who needs to hear the story? As you pray for those you minister to, you may want to develop a way of keeping them before you in prayer. Some have found having faces on their computer to look at while praying helpful; some have found printing off cards with names and faces of the individuals in their youth group helpful. You may find other ways to continue to pray in an outward movement of prayer for those God has placed in your ministry.

I would love to have you e-mail me at the end of the week letting me know if a guided prayer movement using Psalms was helpful to you. What did you notice as you prayed?

I will be calling each of you with a few questions in the next few days and then have a survey for you to complete. I would love to continue to e-mail and dialogue with any of you that wish to even though this will formally complete the process.

We are companions on the journey, and I just want to thank you for your faithfulness in serving in your local church, the love and care you give the youth and young adults of your congregations, and the attentiveness you have given to your own spiritual life this past month. I will continue to pray for you and continue to be available to you.

Blessings.

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APPENDIX G

Interview Questions for Conclusion of Process

1. What was most helpful to you in this process?

2. Did the process help you in building in rhythms and patterns of spiritual disciplines into your life? If so, how?

3. Did this in any way change what you feel you need in your life to experience spiritual growth? If so, how?

4. Has this had any impact on your role as a youth leader?

5. Are you likely to continue with the disciplines practiced during the process? Why or why not?

6. How stressed are you about your work with the youth you lead?

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